Ukraine, Undeclared War

Upheaval in Ukraine began with anti-governmental protests on Kiev’s Independence Square, dividing the citizens of my country into two camps. Political elites in Kiev have for years been pitting Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking citizens against each other. They were flirting with Europe but, at the same time, maintaining close ties with Russia.

At the end of the Euromaidan revolution more than 100 people were killed and the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych was toppled in February 2014. In a matter of weeks, Russia in March annexed the Crimean peninsula without firing a single shot, while politicians were busy sharing seats in the government.

Predictably, people from eastern Ukraine, the so-called Donbass region, distrusted the new Kiev government and some wanted to split off from Ukraine and join Russia the same way as Crimea did.

When the things in Donbass region started to heat up, I went there to see everything with my own eyes. Even though there were no signs of an impending war at the beginning, a miracle did not happen. A conflict erupted with the ensuing consequences: people became embittered because of their neighbour’s deaths; lies and propaganda were spreading rapidly.

Anger and a desire to take a revenge for the deaths of family and friends blurred rational thinking and an ability to make responsible decisions.

The entire Ukraine felt the ripples of disturbances. It seemed like the whole country was plunged into chaos.

Two regions in eastern Ukraine became the centers of uprising. Donetsk and Luhansk rose up against the governmental forces, and local rebels started to storm and seize military bases and administrative buildings. More and more armed people appeared on the streets of Donbass.

Russia actively supported the separatists by providing them with heavy weaponry, ammunition and personnel, smuggling troops through the sections of the Russian-Ukrainian border no longer controlled by the Ukrainian troops.

More than 9,500 people are believed to have been killed and 2 million internally displaced in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, according to the United Nations official data. But unofficial statistics could be much higher.

I come from the south-east of Ukraine, from the city of Berdyansk in the Zaporizhya region. My hometown is now very close to the war zone. I worry about the future of my country, my hometown and my people. With every passing day, the war in eastern Ukraine would throw my country backward, bringing deaths to the families of soldiers and civilians, destroying the economy and creating conditions for social injustice.